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Hogbetsotso festival

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Description

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The **Hogbetsotso festival** (pronounced Hobejojo) is celebrated by the chiefs and peoples of **Anloga** in the **Volta region** of **Ghana**. The festival is celebrated annually on the first Saturday in the month of November. The name of the festival is derived from the **Ewe language** and translates as, the festival of exodus. or "coming from Hogbe (Notsie)". The celebration of the festival was instituted about four decades ago.

History

The **Anlo** are a tribe in the eastern coast of Ghana. Prior to their settling in their present location, they lived in **Notsie**, a town in present-day **Togo**. It is believed that they had migrated from southern **Sudan** to settle in Notsie. Oral tradition has it that they lived under a wicked king, **Togbe Agorkoli**, and in order to escape his tyrannical rule they had to create a hole in the mud wall that surrounded their town. They achieved this by instructing the women to pour all their waste water on particular place in the wall. Over time the spot became soft, thereby allowing the townspeople to break through the wall and escape. Tradition also holds that, to avoid pursuit and make good their escape, they walked backwards with their faces towards the town so that their footprints appeared to be going into the town.

The celebration

Various ceremonies are held during the festival. They include a peace-making period in which all disputes are ended with the finding of amicable solution. It is believed that the reason for this traditional period of peace making is that the people believe their ancestors lived in harmony with themselves all through their escape from Notsie and that it was this character that made their sojourn a success. There is also a purification ceremony of the ceremonial stools (where the Ewe believe the ancestral spirits reside) through the pouring of libations. This is followed by general cleaning where all the villages are swept and rubbish burnt. This cleaning ceremony starts at the **Volta Estuary** and ends after several days at the Mono River in the Republic of Benin. The climax of the festival involves a durbar of the chiefs and peoples of Anlo. The chiefs dress in colorful **regalia** and receive homage from their subjects at the durbar grounds. Various forms of dancing, singing and merry-making characterize the entire festival.


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